

# What Should I Look For In a Social Studies Classroom?

**A social studies classroom should provide practical experience in both content and process skills that become a bridge to the real world of jobs and adult responsibilities at home and within the community. This means going beyond memorization into a world of reasoning.**

*It sounds good, but how will I recognize a good social studies classroom when I see it?*

## What are Students Doing?

- ☐ Interacting with each other, as well as working independently with personal responsibility, just as adults do at work.
- ☐ Using textbooks as only one of many resources. Maps, globes, reference materials, charts, graphs, and computers are useful tools, and students should be learning *how* and *why* to use them.
- ☐ Becoming aware of how social studies is applied to real life problems, not just learning a series of isolated skills. And, as in real life, learning that complex problems are not solved quickly.
- ☐ Realizing that many problems have more than just one “right” answer. Students can explain the different strategies they use to reach a variety of solutions, or when they make one choice over another.
- ☐ Working in groups to test solutions to problems. They are more than only listeners and are highly involved.
- ☐ Learning how to communicate social studies ideas with one another in a civil and courteous manner.
- ☐ Working in a physical setting that promotes teamwork and helps them challenge and defend possible solutions. Even while using computers, they do not always work alone but also cooperatively.
- ☐ Working with other subject areas to make connections between disciplines.

## What are Teachers Doing?

- ☐ Planning ahead of time which content will be attached to which processes as the year progresses. Process in isolation is irrelevant. Content without process has little meaning.
- ☐ Raising questions that encourage students to explore several solution and challenge deeper thinking about real problems. They are not just lecturing.
- ☐ Moving around the room to keep everyone engaged and on track. Students are not glued to the chalkboard.
- ☐ Allowing students to raise original questions about social studies for which there is no “answer in the book,” and promoting discussions of these questions, recognizing that it may be other students who will find reasonable answers.
- ☐ Using maps, graphs, charts, and technology when it is appropriate, not just as “busy work”.
- ☐ Drawing on student discovery and creativity to keep them interested. The teacher knows that boredom is the enemy of learning.
- ☐ Encouraging students to go on to the next challenge once a step is learned, understanding that not all students learn at the same pace.
- ☐ Bringing a variety of resources into the classroom from guest speakers to creative uses of technology.
- ☐ Working with other teachers/staff to make connections between disciplines to show how social studies is a part of every other major subject, including use of coordinated, multi-graded projects and assignments.
- ☐ Using assessments that reflect the new ways that social studies are being taught, stressing problem solving skills and understanding not just memory.
- ☐ Exploring with students the career opportunities that emphasize social studies concepts, processes, and applications.